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Self-Knowledge

Adi Shankaracharya's 68-Verse Treatise on the Philosophy of Nondualism: the Absolute Oneness of Ultimate Reality

Introduction, Notes and Transliteration

Roy Eugene Davis

A direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda

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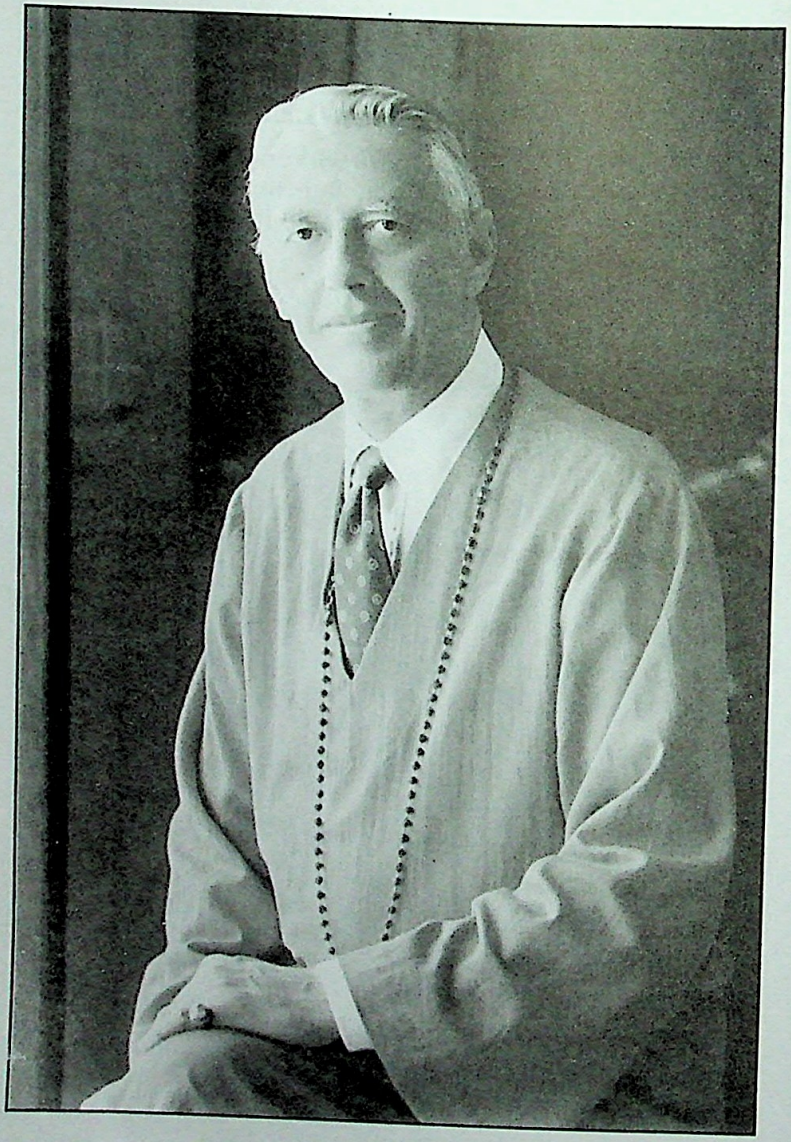

THE AUTHOR

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Introduction, Notes and Commentary
ROY EUGENE DAVIS

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SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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I honor Truth,
the Supreme Teacher,
whose essence is bliss,
giving the highest happiness,
pure, infinite, one, eternal,
tranquil, beyond all change
and phenomena.
I honor Truth,
the Supreme Teacher.

– Adapted from an ancient Vedic hymn

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Preface

We are innately inclined to want to realize our true nature and know the ultimate Reality commonly referred to as God.

The direct way to realize our true nature and fully know ultimate Reality is to regularly practice *yoga*: to repeatedly unify our attention and awareness with our essence of Being until the truth is Self-revealed from within us.

All knowledge of the one Reality and its processes is within each of its units. With Self-realization, your knowledge of the one Reality and its processes is realized.

Hearing about what is true is helpful, contemplating it is more beneficial, realizing it is liberating. It is my hope that the information presented in this book will be immediately helpful to every person who reads it, beneficial during their endeavors to acquire accurate knowledge of higher realities, and realized when their consciousness is fully illumined.

Roy Eugene Davis

January 2010
Center for Spiritual Awareness
Lakemont, Georgia

INTRODUCTION

Shankara was born in the eighth century on the west coast of south India. After studying the Vedas he was initiated into the monastic life at an early age by Govindapada, a renowned ascetic of that era. In our Kriya Yoga tradition it is said that he was also initiated by Mahavatar Babaji.

After devoting himself to yoga practices and meditation, Shankara wrote commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita, some of the Upanishads and other scriptures, and traveled throughout India declaring the oneness of a supreme Reality and refuting erroneous philosophical doctrines. He reorganized the ancient, renunciate swami order and established permanent monastic centers in four regions of India: Sringeri (Mysore) in the south, Puri in the east, Dwaraka in the west, and Badrinath in the Himalayas.

Most of his biographers say that he left his body in his thirty-second year, at Kedarnath, in the Himalayas. At that time it was believed by some people that he went to a secluded region of the Himalayas, to there live as a mortal-immortal.

Shankara lived during an era when Sanatana Dharma (the Eternal Way of Right Living) was beginning to be more widely emphasized, authoritative leadership was lacking, and conflicting religious sects were promoting a variety of philosophical opinions. His emphasis on the oneness of a supreme Reality and the divinity of each person was a harmonizing influence.

Besides expounding his nondualistic views as presented in *Self-Knowledge* (Sanskrit *Atma Bodha*), he also wrote poems and composed hymns to reverently honor a

variety of gods and goddesses (real or imagined aspects of cosmic powers and their influences) to inspire and encourage people in all walks of life to be devoted to right living and spiritual practices. Shankara's *Sundarya Lahari* (Ocean of Divine Beauty) has one hundred hymns (songs of praise) that can be recited to arouse spiritual ardor and contemplated to provide helpful insights. The word *Lahari* suggests surges of spontaneous, wave-like outpourings of gratitude from the devotee, as portrayed in these verses:

In the lotus with one thousand petals [the crown chakra in the higher brain], you [awakened spiritual energy] interact with your lord [pure consciousness] in secret, having entirely traversed your path: the earth element principle in the base chakra; water in the second; fire in the third; air in the fourth; space with fine essences in the fifth; mind at the sixth [the spiritual eye] between and above and eyebrows. *(Verse 9)*

By my self-surrender, let my talking be recitations of your name, the movements of my limbs be gestures of worship, my walking be walking around and with you, my food be a sacrificial offering to you, my lying down be bowing before you. Whatever I do, let it be transformed into an act of worship of you. *(Verse 27)*

Some proponents of nondualism naively say that the universe and its contents are illusions. *Mistaken perceptions* of objective and subjective conditions are illusions.

Author's Notes

My commentary has excerpts from the writings of Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda, and words my guru spoke to me during our private conversations.

Selections from Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras (circa 200 C.E.) are from my book *The Science of Self-Realization*, published in the United States by CSA Press and in India by Indian Books Centre.

The chart on the facing page may help you to more easily understand some of the concepts in the text. It is not necessary to immediately comprehend how the processes of cosmic manifestation emerge and the influences they have. Patient investigation will bring forth the truth from within you.

The Sequential Processes of Cosmic Manifestation

Transcendent, Absolute (Pure) Reality

Infinite (without boundaries), devoid of attributes.

Radiant Field With Three Constituent Attributes

luminosity	transformative influence	inertia
(sattwa)	(rajas)	(tamas)

Field of Primordial Nature

Cosmic vibration (Om) with time, space, fine cosmic forces.

Field of Cosmic Mind

Field of individualized units of pure consciousness produced by the blending of the Radiant field (Oversoul) and the characteristics of the field of primordial nature. Souls have Self-awareness, intellect, mind, and ego (a confined sense of self-identity).

Causal Realm

Cosmic electromagnetic field
and electromagnetic fields of souls.
Abode of souls that have transcended the astral realm.

Astral Realm

1. Capacities of smelling, tasting, touching, hearing, seeing.
2. Capacities of reproduction, excretion, mobility, manual dexterity, and speech.
3. Five subtle element-essences.

Abode of unenlightened souls after physical life.

Physical Universe

Material manifestations of five subtle element essences: space, with fine substances; air, gaseous substances; fire, transformative; water, circulates, lubricates, and dissolves; earth, subatomic particles and atoms bonded by electromagnetic forces that form material things.
Abode of souls incarnated in physical bodies.

Word Meanings to Know

absolute Perfect. Not mixed: pure. Not limited.

consciousness The capacity of self-awareness and observance. The totality of memories, thoughts, beliefs, and sensitivities.

disciple A learner or student.

ego A sense of self distinct from the world and from other selves. A mistaken sense of self-identity.

enlightened To have or be endowed with knowledge.

field *Physics:* A region of space marked by gravitational or electromagnetic forces. *See the chart on the preceding page.*

guru Teacher. One who imparts knowledge.

ignorance *Nescience*: absence of knowledge.

karma Sanskrit verb root *kr*, to make, do, or act. Causes, usually mental impressions, which may produce effects.

meditation Uninterrupted concentration on an object being contemplated or examined.

realization Direct experience with knowledge of something.

reality The quality or state of being actual or true. That which exists of itself or has essence (an inherent, unchanging nature). We exist and have essence because we are units of one Reality. Changeable things are manifested by that which is alone real.

Self With an upper case *S*: our changeless essence of Being.

soul In the philosophical system of nondualism, a soul is viewed as a pure-conscious unit of one Reality identified with mental modifications and its environment, confined and limited until it is spiritually awake and realizes its true nature.

Shankaracharya Sanskrit verb root *sam*, auspicious; *kr*, to make; *acharya*, teacher.

yoga Unification. The aim of yoga practice is to bring together attention and awareness with one's essence of Being.

Self-Knowledge

1. I am composing *Self-Knowledge* for those who have been purified by the practice of austerities, are peaceful in heart, free from cravings, and fervently desirous of liberation.

Austerities that purify the mind include the right performance of necessary duties; control of thoughts, emotions, speech, and behaviors; and meditative contemplation.

We are peaceful in heart (our essence of Being) when we are established in Self-contentment at all times regardless of objective or subjective conditions that may exist.

We are free from cravings when we no longer have strong desires to have experiences in this world or in subtle realms.

When our fervent desire to be liberated is constant, we are naturally inclined to do what is necessary to allow our innate knowledge of our true nature to be Self-revealed.

Self-knowledge results in liberation of consciousness.

2. As fire is the direct cause of cooking food, so knowledge, and not any kind of action, is the direct cause of liberation of consciousness, which cannot be had without knowledge.

Ethical, compassionate, disciplined living and superconscious meditation are preparatory practices used to calm the mind, clarify awareness, and improve powers of discriminative intelligence and intuition. Only when innate knowledge of our true nature and of the one Reality fully emerges and is permanently present are we liberated.

Before we are liberated, we should know that, at the core of our Being, we are always whole, pure, serene, and joyous; only the surface of our awareness may be blurred and fragmented.

Why actions cannot cause Self-realization.

3. Actions cannot remove ignorance. Knowledge alone dispels ignorance, as light dispels darkness.

Ignorance (*nescience*, absence of knowledge) of our true nature cannot be removed by ignorance-impelled actions. Knowledge of higher realities acquired from a reliable source can be helpful to sincere truth seekers who are sufficiently motivated to learn how to allow their own innate Self-knowledge to emerge.

When the true nature of the universe and the relationship between it and one's essence of Being is known, and when one knows that lack of knowledge causes souls to forget their true Self and to suffer, one desires to be relieved of misfortune. Freedom from the bonds of ignorance then becomes the primary aim of life. – *Swami Sri Yukteswar*

The primary cause of a mistaken sense of self-identity.

4. It is only because of ignorance that the Self appears to be finite. When ignorance is banished, the Self, which does not admit to any multiplicity, reveals itself by itself like the sun when a cloud is removed.

Incomplete perception of one's real nature is the primary cause of restrictive conditions which may be dormant, weak, aroused, or freely expressive. – *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 2:4*

Samadhi is realized when fluctuations and changes in the mind and awareness are restrained and pacified. The seer [knower] then abides in its own essence. – *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 1:2,3*

How mind and consciousness are purified.

5. By repeated practice, knowledge purifies the mind and consciousness of the embodied soul, then itself disappears, as a cleansing agent disappears after water has been purified.

Frequent practice of superconscious meditation brings forth Self-knowledge that purifies subconscious levels of the mind and clarifies consciousness. Until we are Self-realized, we may be inclined to think that this knowledge comes from an external source. With Self-realization. that erroneous notion disappears.

Meditation is conscious awareness of the presence of God within us. It is revealed when our consciousness is purified by liberating it from all concepts of duality and finiteness.

– *Lahiri Mahasaya*

Awakening from the "dream" of mortality.

6. The world, filled with attachments and aversions, and the rest [the variety of possible mental and emotional states common to the ordinary human condition] is like a dream that appears to be real as long as one is ignorant; it is seen as unreal when one is awake.

In the absence of Self-knowledge, perceptions are flawed, illusions are common, causes of events and circumstances are not always known, and what is observed may be thought to be independent of its source.

Paramahansa Yogananda often told disciples to remember that a changeless Reality exists behind the drama of ordinary life. He said that events, as most people experience them, are like motion pictures that one observes without being aware of how they are projected on the screen of space and time.

That which endures without changing is said to be *real*. That which can be modified, changed, or will cease to exist is not of itself real. Expecting transient things, circumstances, or relationships to provide us with lasting security or happiness will eventually result in discomfort or disappointment.

When the fluctuations in one's mind and awareness are transcended during meditation and consciousness is purified, the supreme Self is realized. – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

From that flash of perception [which occurs when one meditatively contemplates in the crown chakra] knowledge of ultimate Reality is revealed. – *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 3:34*

How long do illusions of what is Real remain?

7. The world appears to be real until one supreme Reality, the basis of everything, is fully known. It is like the illusion [an appearance] of silver in an oyster shell.

Things, events, and circumstances in the mundane realm come into manifestation and eventually disappear. They exist, but they are not inherently real because they are not permanent. That is why spiritual aspirants are advised to avoid attachments to external conditions and learn to rely on the *source* of everything for their security and well-being.

One Reality is Self-Existent.

8. Various forms exist in the imagination of the perceiver, the substratum being the eternal, all-pervading Reality which is pure existence and intelligence. Names and forms are like bangles and bracelets. The eternal Reality is like gold.

Gold is still gold when it is formed as jewelry. The pure essence of ultimate Reality does not change regardless of outer appearances. Knowing that all that is observed in the mundane realm is insubstantial does not mean that we can be irresponsible or impractical. Duties are to be skillfully performed, relationships that are of value are to be nurtured, and the environment is to be cared for while we are awakening to Self-knowing.

Why what is observed appears to be varied.

9. As the all-pervading space appears to be diverse because of its association with various restricting conditions, and is perceived as one when the restricting conditions are absent, so the omnipresent Reality appears to be diverse because of its association with the various restricting conditions. It is perceived as one when they are absent.

The universe is a manifestation of cosmic forces emanated from the Radiant field of supreme Reality.

When the mind is serene, the reality of God is reflected in it
– Lahiri Mahasaya

Why differences in what is observed are thought to be real.

10. Because of identification with restricting conditions, such ideas as social status, color, and one's role or place in life are falsely presumed to be characteristics of the Self, as flavor and color are mixed with water.

Every person is a unit of pure consciousness regardless of their personality characteristics, the role they play, or their social status. The acquired habit of identifying with modified mental states and objective phenomena causes and sustains their flawed perceptions of being indepen-

dent units of consciousness separate from one Reality.

Erroneous ideas and opinions do not modify the pure Self, which cannot be influenced by them. During sleep and when our attention is absorbed in meditative superconsciousness, we are not conscious of our physical body or egocentric views.

The body through which souls have physical experiences.

11. The body, through which the Self experiences pleasure and pain, is determined by past actions and formed out of the five great subtle elements, which become gross when one half of one subtle element joins with one eighth of the other four.

Thoughts, feelings, and actions produce or attract a variety of effects and perceptions which impress memories in the sub-conscious levels of the mind. Influential subconscious impressions may be supportive, debilitating, or have little or no effect. Subconscious impressions which cause effects may be karmic or causative influences which, if troublesome, can be overcome. Constructive thinking and behaving, discerning the difference between our true nature and ordinary states of consciousness, and superconscious meditation resist, weaken, and neutralize troublesome subconscious influences.

The subtle element-essences of space, air, fire, water, and earth, when combined, produce corresponding, gross material substances and characteristics. Sequential manifestations of cosmic processes are described in the Samkhya philosophical system in which objects of knowledge are precisely defined. *See the chart on page 11.*

Every person is born with a basic mind-body constitution which, when maintained in a balanced condition, contributes to health and well-being. Ayurvedic

(life-knowledge) regimens can be helpful in maintaining one's mind-body constitution in a constant state of balance. Such regimens may include the cultivation of optimism and emotional stability, detoxification of the body when necessary, appropriate exercise, oil massage, food choices, regulated routines of wholesome activity and adequate sleep, and superconscious meditation practice.

Approximately one hundred elements are known to exist. Elements are composed of atoms which have a dense, positively charged nucleus surrounded by electrons equal to the number of nuclear protons. Some major elements used by the body in its functions are oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium and phosphorous. Also used are small quantities of sulfur, chlorine, sodium, zinc, and magnesium, and traces of iron, cobalt, copper, manganese, fluorine, iodine, boron, aluminum, molybdenum, selenium, and chromium.

The subtle body.

12. The subtle body, the instrument of a soul's experiences, consists of five [aspects of] prana, ten organs [differentiated parts of an organism adapted for specific functions], the mind, and the faculty of intellect, formed from rudimentary [not yet fully developed] elements before their subdivisions and combinations.

In the nondualistic system of philosophy, a soul (Sanskrit *jiva*) is considered as one's spiritual essence identified with modified states of mind and consciousness. It is this mistaken sense of self-identity that is to be redeemed by Self-knowledge. When a person who is Self-realized still has subconscious conditionings to neutralize or transcend, or erroneous notions in the mind, he or she is said to be spiritually free while embodied. Supreme freedom

(Sanskrit *mukta*) from all limiting conditions is the final stage of Self-realization.

The subtle body is composed of five aspects of prana (verb roots *an*, to breathe, and *pra*, forth); ten astral capacities of smell, touch, taste, hearing, sight, generation, excretion, mobility, manual dexterity, and speech, along with the causal components of a mind used to process perceptions and think; and the faculty of discriminative intelligence. The five aspects of prana are that which rises upwards; that which moves downward; that which regulates those two; that which carries gross food to the downward moving aspect and transports subtler material to various parts of the body; and that which brings up or carries down what has been eaten or swallowed.

The subtle body is retained by a soul that experiences astral life after physical demise. In the causal realm, the five sense capacities are absent; intelligence and intuition are used. Souls in the causal realm instantly travel near or far by intention.

Mastery of meditative contemplation provides insight and revelations of higher realities. – *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 3:5*

The Self is other than the physical, astral, and causal bodies.

13. Ignorance, which is indescribable and without beginning, is the primary cause of restrictions superimposed on the Self. Know that the Self is other than the three bodies.

Absence of knowledge is said to be without beginning because inertia which blurs awareness is an inherent characteristic of the tamasic attribute in the Radiant field and its emanated vibration (Om). Units of pure consciousness are individualized by the blending of charac-

teristics of the Radiant field and the field of primordial nature. Self-knowledge is obscured when souls are influenced by inertia in primordial nature before they become involved with causal, astral, and physical realms.

The two immediate ways to restore our consciousness to its original, pure wholeness are to: 1) discriminate between what we are not (the physical body, personality characteristics, and mental states) and what we are (pure consciousness); 2) detach attention from objective conditions and subjective mental and emotional states.

The true Self was never born, nor will it ever die. The true Self is uncreated, unchanging, indestructible, and eternal.

– Bhagavad Gita 2:21

Why the Self appears to be like its sheaths or coverings.

14. By identifying with the five sheaths, the Self appears to be like them, as a clear crystal appears to be blue or red when placed on a blue or red cloth.

The five coverings of an embodied soul are described as the bliss sheath that enables the embodied soul to be somewhat aware of its joyous, pure essence; an intellect sheath; a mind sheath; a prana sheath of life forces; and the physical body. The soul does not unite with them; it only identifies with and expresses through them. Just as ultimate Reality expresses through nature and things without being influenced by them, a Self-realized person can express through the mind and body without being influenced or confined by them or by events that occur.

By knowing the distinction between the attributes of nature and the Self, and by mastery of the senses, supremacy over all states of consciousness is acquired.

– Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 3:49

How the difference between our true nature and the sheaths through which we express be can be discerned.

15. One should, by discrimination, separate the pure Self from the sheaths by which it is covered, as one separates a kernel of rice from the husk by striking it with a pestle.

The five coverings of material substances can be used while knowing them to be other than what we are. By discerning our pure-conscious essence, we can be detached from what we are not. Self-knowledge can then prevail.

Discrimination of what is true can result from affirming what we are not, or what we are. Declare: "I am not the ego, intellect, mind, or causal, astral, or physical body." Or directly acknowledge, "I am a flawless unit of pure consciousness."

The radiance of our essence reflected in our faculty of intellect.

16. Though all-pervading, the Self does not shine in everything; it is apparent only in the faculty of intellect, like a reflection in clear water or a clean mirror.

Just as the one Reality pervades all realms, an individualized unit pervades its intellect, mind, and causal, astral, and physical bodies. Our intellect, when pure and transparent, reflects the luminosity of our essence of Being.

The Self as the witness of what is perceived and experienced.

17. Realize the Self to be distinct from the body, sense organs, mind, intellect, and the myriad aspects of nature—as the witness of their functions, as a king views his kingdom.

Partial Self-knowledge can be had by improving our powers of discrimination. Self-knowledge that is more accurate can be intuitively discerned. Self-revealed knowledge is flawless. When we are fully Self-realized we can observe physical, mental, and intellectual processes, sensory input, and objective phenomena with dispassionate objectivity.

Distinguishing between the Self and actions that occur.

18. As the moon appears to be moving when clouds move in the sky, so to those who do not discriminate, the Self appears to be active when only the senses are active.

Our essence of Being is changeless; the silent witness of what is experienced or observed. When we are identified with mental, emotional, and physical states, we may be inclined to think we are implementing actions rather than observing them.

That person is wisest who aspires to know God. That person is most successful who realizes God. – *Paramahansa Yogananda*

The consciousness of the Self makes actions possible.

19. The body, senses, mind, and intellect are engaged in their respective actions because of consciousness which is inherent in the Self, just as people are able to perform work with the help of the light that is inherent in the sun.

Our body, sense organs, mind, and faculty of intelligence function because our consciousness pervades and empowers them. We are superior to them, as the supreme Reality is superior to all that it manifests and through which it expresses.

The mind is the link between the Self and the senses. Divine perceptions are acquired when the senses are spiritualized. Joy, sweetness, and exultation fill the entire being when the senses are purified and inspired by the purity of the Self.

– Lahiri Mahasaya

Why physical characteristics may be mistakenly presumed to belong to the Self.

20. People who are not wise, because of nondiscrimination superimpose on the stainless Self, which is consciousness and existence, the characteristics of the body and senses, just as they might attribute traits such as blue color to the sky.

The sky appears to be blue because that wavelength of light is more widely scattered in the atmosphere than the red, orange, yellow, green, indigo, and violet wavelengths of the spectrum of light from the sun.

Why mental characteristics may be attributed to the Self.

21. As the movement of water may be attributed to the light of the moon reflected in it, so one's mistaken self-identity, attachments to pleasurable sensations, and other limitations, which are of the mind, are falsely attributed to the Self.

The bliss (pure joyousness of Self-realization) is different than the pleasurable sensations which may be experienced because of an assumed sense of self-importance or sensory stimulation. Ordinary pleasurable experiences are acceptable for a spiritual aspirant. Addictions to such experiences, and to the conditions which support them, are to be avoided because they may incline a person to rely on them to provide feelings of well-being rather than aspire to know the superior joyousness of Self-knowing.

Misfortune and limitations do not exist for the Self.

22. Attachment, desire, pleasure, pain, and other troublesome conditions are perceived to exist as long as the intellect and mind function. They are not perceived in deep sleep. They are associated with the mind and not to the Self.

The first sentence of this verse refers to waking and dream states. During dreamless sleep our awareness is detached from the mind and is identified with the causal body or sheath.

Focus your attention within. You will experience new strength, new power, and new peace in body, mind, and spirit. All bonds that limit you will be vanquished. – *Paramahansa Yogananda*

The real nature of the Self.

23. The nature of the Self is purity and bliss, as luminosity is the nature of the sun, coolness of water and heat of fire.

The nature of our essence of Being described in this verse is not acquired; it is always present.

How erroneous ideas are produced.

24. Such a notion as "I know" is produced by identification, due to nondiscrimination, with modifications of the mind with the existence and consciousness aspects of the Self.

Three constituent attributes of nature which determine the inherent characteristics of all living things are also in the mind. The Sanskrit terms used for these attributes are *sattwa*, which clarifies and illuminates; *rajas*, which stimulates and impels actions; and *tamas*, inertia, which

blurs awareness.

When memories or feelings arise or something is observed, attributes of nature in the mind that are stimulated produce wavelike movements in the mind and in the intellect in which the Self is reflected. Thoughts such as "I know," "I am happy," "I am sad," "I am afraid," or others, then emerge. The Self is never happy, sad, or afraid. It is only because of not discerning the difference between one's essence and ideas produced in the mind that results in these and other erroneous notions.

Read a little. Meditate more. Think of God all the time.
—*Paramahansa Yogananda*

What is eternally true of the Self.

25. The Self never changes and the intellect is never endowed with consciousness. An ordinary person may believe the Self to be identical with the intellect and have delusions such as that he is the seer and the knower.

Our true nature never changes. The faculty of intellect formed of fine material substance is not a conscious entity. It provides the capacity to determine or distinguish what is examined.

To define yourself in terms of human limitations is to desecrate the image of God that you are. —*Paramahansa Yogananda*

Accurate perceptions free us from illusions.

26. The Self, regarding itself as soul, is overcome by fear, like a person who [mistakenly] regards a rope as a snake. The Self regains fearlessness by realizing that it is not a deluded soul; it is pure consciousness.

In many religious traditions, one's essence is said to be a soul. In the philosophical system of nondualism, the light of the Self reflected in the mind is defined as a soul. When we mistakenly presume to be that light, our thoughts and emotions correspond to that erroneous notion.

Our self-luminous essence enlivens the mind and body.

27. The mind, sense organs, and other components of the body, are illumined by the Self alone, as an object is illuminated by a lamp. Material things cannot be self-illumined.

The components (parts of the whole) of our body, formed of fine and gross material substances produced by cosmic forces, are enlivened by our consciousness and our vital forces. When we withdraw from the body with our mind and intellectual capacity, its organs and systems cease to function and their element-essences are dispersed into space.

The reality of God is not comprehended until one's consciousness is elevated above the attributes of nature.

– Swami Sri Yukteswar

The one Reality is self-luminous.

28. As a lighted lamp does not need another lamp to manifest its light, so the supreme Reality, being consciousness, does not need another instrument of consciousness to illumine it.

If a light as of a thousand suns should suddenly arise in the sky, such brilliance might be imagined as being similar to the luminosity of the supreme Reality. Arjuna saw the entire, multivaried universe abiding in the wholeness of that Reality.

– Bhagavad Gita 11:12,13

A direct way to Self-knowing.

29. By negating all restricting influences with the help of the scriptural statement, "It [ultimate Reality] is not this [an appearance], it is not that," realize the oneness of the Self with ultimate Reality by meditative contemplation on the knowledge-based utterances of the great sages.

Erroneous beliefs can be eradicated and troublesome influences can be weakened and neutralized by affirming and realizing what is true. When modified states of mind and consciousness are transcended, their characteristics are no longer influential.

The Self is not what is observed.

30. The body, produced by ignorance and of the nature of objects, is perishable. Realize by discrimination that you are the pure Self, completely different from them.

In this philosophical system, all material things are viewed as having been produced by unconscious, inertial (tamasic) influences emanated from the field of primordial nature. It can be said that the universe was produced by motiveless necessity. Without a personal motive, because the one Reality is not a cosmic person; necessary, because of the influential attributes in the Radiant field and its projected manifestations.

Advocates of materialism assert that physical matter in its movements and modifications is the only reality: that every- thing in the universe, including mind, thoughts, and feelings are explainable in terms of physical laws. They say that a "self" does not exist, that what is perceived as a conscious self is the content of a sophisticated model of reality generated by the brain.

Two affirmations (declarations) of what is true of the Self.

31. I am free from changes such as birth, poor health, senility, and death. I am other than the body. I am unattached to the objects of the senses such as sound and taste.
32. I am free from sorrow, attachments, malice, and fear, for I am other than the mind. One Reality is without breath and mind, pure, the highest, imperishable.

The origin of objective phenomena.

33. From it [one Reality], prana, mind, sense organs, ether, air, fire, water, and earth are produced.

The constituent attributes of the Radiant field of one Reality produced the universe and govern its orderly processes.

Three affirmations of what is true of the Self.

34. I am without attributes and action, eternal, pure, without stain of desire, changeless, formless, always free.
35. I fill all things like the ether. Changeless, the same in all, I am pure and unattached.
36. I am that Reality, eternal, free, one, indivisible. The nature of bliss, truth, knowledge, infinity.

Accurate knowledge of one Reality and our true nature removes the causes of misfortune.

37. The impression of "I am that one Reality," that results from uninterrupted reflection, dispels ignorance and its distractions, as a rasayana [vitalizing medicine] destroys disease.

Memories of meditative insights that provided us with

accurate knowledge of our true nature clarify our consciousness and can inspire us to avoid thoughts and situations that might distract our attention from our spiritual practices.

Rasayanas are herbs and foods used in the Ayurvedic system of wellness to cleanse the body and restore it to health.

How to meditate.

38. Sitting in a solitary place, freeing the mind from desires and controlling the senses, unwaveringly meditate on the infinite Reality which alone is real.

The yogi should meditatively contemplate the supreme Reality, in solitude, alone, with mind and body controlled, having no cravings for anything. Established in a firm meditation posture, in a clean, quiet place, intent on practice, with thoughts and senses subdued, that one should meditate to purify the mind. Holding the body, neck, and head erect, motionless, gazing into the spiritual eye, serene, fearless, self-controlled, contemplating the supreme Reality, the devotee should sit, devoted to the highest realization. – *Bhagavad Gita 6:10 – 14*

How objective phenomena should be perceived and how the one Reality should be examined until fully known.

39. The wise person should intelligently view the entire objective world as one Reality alone and constantly think of it as being like a stainless sky.

Viewing objective things and circumstances as ever-changing events occurring in the omnipresent Reality which is not affected by them helps us to maintain a cosmic conscious perspective.

How a spiritually enlightened person lives.

40. One who has realized the supreme goal discards all objects such as name and form and lives as an embodiment of infinite, blissful, consciousness.

A fully enlightened person lives freely and responsibly without attachments to objective conditions. Self-realization is then not diminished at any time.

The changeless essence of the one Reality.

41. The supreme Reality is pure existence-bliss. Self-shining, it does not have such distinctions as knower, knowledge, and object of knowledge.

The transcendent aspect of the one Reality is outside of space-time realms, yet it is their source and support. Being pure, it is devoid of attributes. Although it cannot be conceptualized, it can be directly experienced and fully known as it is because our essence of Being is an individualized unit of it.

How innate knowledge can be allowed to emerge.

42. By constant, right meditation, the flame of Self-knowledge is aroused, which completely removes ignorance.

Frequent, regular, superconscious meditation unveils and brings forth innate knowledge of our true nature.

Many people who aspire to be Self-realized do not endeavor to live effectively, profoundly examine higher realities, or meditate superconsciously on a regular schedule even when they know they should. They allow their attention to aimlessly wander and let emotions and debilitating habits determine their modes of thinking and behavior.

Swami Sri Yukteswar, sometimes reminded disciples of the importance of regular superconscious meditation by chanting these words:

Wake, now wake, O my saint,
Wake, now wake, O my saint.
You did not meditate,
You did not concentrate.
You wasted time in idle talk.
Wake, now wake, O my saint.
Death may be at your door,
You may not have time anymore
to redeem your soul.

How our true nature is Self-revealed.

43. As the brilliant sun is seen when darkness recedes at dawn, so pure consciousness is revealed when ignorance is banished by knowledge.

Kriya Yoga is practiced to remove all obstacles to samadhi.
– Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 2:2

When conditions that blur our powers of perception and confine our awareness are absent, innate knowledge of our real nature is effortlessly Self-revealed.

A preliminary state of samadhi (Sanskrit verb root *sam*, to bring together), experienced when attention is absorbed in an object of meditative contemplation (light, sound, joy), has the support of that object of perception. Transcendent samadhi does not have an object of perception. Samadhi with an object of perception does not bring forth innate knowledge. Transcendent samadhi is pure realization of one's essence. Both kinds of samadhi may first be of short duration because subliminal influences may stimulate thoughts and emotions and distract

attention. By repeated practice of both kinds of samadhi, proficiency can be acquired. Since transcendent samadhi is devoid of thoughts, it is not maintained when one is thinking or otherwise active. Complete Self-realization allows one to be Self-knowing when thinking and acting.

People whose minds are influenced by inertia are as though hypnotized. Inclined to believe that having a continuing series of problems and limiting circumstances is normal, they are unable to imagine the freedom they could have if they were willing to learn how to accept it.

Meditation practice results in divine perceptions which emerge from the essence of one's Being. Self-realization is the Self-revelation of our true nature which illumines our mind and consciousness. – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

That [kriya] pranayama unveils the reality of Self.
– *Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 2:52*

Seeing the truth where it is.

44. Though the Self is always a present reality, because of ignorance it is not known. When ignorance is removed, the Self is realized. It is like a person with an ornament around his neck [who looks elsewhere for it].

A man who desired to be rich devoted many years searching for a precious gemstone that he could sell for a large amount of money. In his old age, he discovered that the gemstone on the necklace he wore, given to him by a close relative when he was a child, was very valuable. For many decades he had been so outwardly focused that he had not thought about having the ornament on his necklace examined by a jeweler.

In a similar manner, many people search outwardly in vain for that which has always been within them.

The immediate way to be Self-realized.

45. The one Reality appears to be a soul because one's true nature is not known. This illusional sense of self-identity disappears when the real nature of the soul is realized.

A soul is a pure-conscious unit of one Reality confined by a mistaken sense of self-identity. When this error in perception is corrected, the truth seeker's consciousness is immediately restored to its original, pure wholeness.

What restores our consciousness to wholeness?

46. Knowledge that emerges with realization of the true nature of Reality immediately banishes mistaken ideas that arise when one is egocentric, as the sun's light enables one to move freely while on a journey.

Knowledge of what is realized emerges along with realization. If a person who believes himself to be Self-realized does not yet have accurate knowledge of his true nature and his relationship with the Infinite, he is not Self-realized.

How a spiritually enlightened person views the world.

47. The yogi who is completely enlightened sees, with the eye of knowledge, the universe in the Self and regards everything as the Self and nothing else.

Liberation is realized when the attributes [three gunas] of nature, having been restored to their primary status, are no longer influential and the Self is established in its own essence. Liberation is then complete; the Self abides in pure consciousness. Only one Reality is known; the universe and its processes are seen as products of its self-referring actions.

– Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras 4:34–37

Why only one Reality exists.

48. Because a universe emanates from the Radiant field of one Reality, nothing exists that is other than it. As clay pots and jars are actually clay, to those who are enlightened, all that is perceived is one Reality.

Note: Repeating key themes of a dissertation is done to keep the reader's attention focused on them until they are firmly impressed in the mind or meaningful insights emerge.

Liberation of consciousness.

49. A free soul with Self-knowledge, discarding all restrictions, realizes pure, conscious, blissful existence.
50. A free soul, having crossed the ocean of delusion, devoid of attachments and aversions, peacefully abides in the bliss of permanent Self-realization.
51. Renouncing attachments to illusory external happiness, the Self-abiding free soul, satisfied with the bliss of the Self, shines inwardly.

When all mental impressions of karma are dissolved and erroneous ideas, attachments, and aversions have been renounced, Self-realization is permanent.

Freedom from all limitations.

52. Though associated with various restricting influences, one whose Self-knowledge is firmly established is undefiled by their traits is calm, even-minded, and moves about unattached like the wind.
53. When all restrictions are dissolved or transcended, one is completely absorbed in the all-pervading Reality, like water in water, space in space, and light in light.

With the emergence of Self-knowledge, karmic conditions cease to be influential. – *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 4:30*

Absolute Self-realization.

54. Know complete realization of the one Reality to be that which leaves nothing more to be realized, the blessedness of which leaves no other bliss to be desired, the knowledge of which leaves nothing more to be known.

Paramahansa Yogananda told a disciple that, for as long as a person was within the field of space-time, the possibilities of having perceptions and experiences were endless. When he was asked if such possibilities would ever cease to exist, he replied, "Yes, when you realize your own endlessness."

Absolute liberation of consciousness.

55. Know *that* to be the ultimate Reality which, when seen, leaves nothing more to be seen, which when realized, one is not again born into the world of becoming.

From the field of primordial nature to the physical realm, the three constituent attributes that pervade them regulate cosmic forces that produce changes and transformations. The emergence of Self-knowledge enables us to dispassionately observe processes that occur without being unduly influenced by them.

One Reality endures.

56. Know *that* to be supreme Reality which is pure existence-knowledge-bliss, infinite, and eternal.
57. Know *that* to be supreme Reality which is indivisible, the unchanging substratum that remains when all sense-perceived objects have been negated.

Realization is in accord with our capacity to experience it.

58. The gods experience only a minute portion of the limitless bliss of Self-realization, and enjoy in their proportion their shares of that minute portion.

The term "gods" is used for souls in physical, astral, or causal realms which, because they are not yet fully Self-realized, do not have the capacity to experience the pure joyousness that will constantly be experienced when they are liberated.

Souls may not be Self-realized because of lack of aspiration to be fully awake; attachment to false beliefs; identification with modified states of mind and consciousness; inability or reluctance to transcend their mistaken sense of self-identity; attachment to pleasurable meditative perceptions or to their present stage of spiritual growth.

In 1950, I asked Paramahansa Yogananda, "How many of the saints that you wrote about in *Autobiography of a Yogi* are now liberated?" He said, "Not many. Many saints are satisfied to experience the bliss of God-communion and don't aspire to liberation of consciousness." He then emphatically said, "*You* must go all the way!"

Remembering his words, I often remind my disciples, and people who attend my lectures and seminars, of the importance of their constant aspiration to be Self-realized in their current incarnation. I also advise them not to be satisfied with fleeting insights or pleasant feelings when they meditate.

That which is to be acknowledged and realized.

59. All things are pervaded by the supreme Reality; all actions are possible because of it.
60. Realize *that* to be the supreme Reality which is nei-

ther subtle nor gross; short nor long; without birth or change; without form or characteristics.

61. Realize *that* to be the supreme Reality by the light of which orbs like suns and moons are illumined—but which cannot be illumined by their light—and by which everything is illumined.

Our planet is approximately 93 million miles distant from the sun, an incandescent ball of gases with an interior temperature of about 27 million degrees F (16 million degrees C). Suns (stars) are said to be illumined by the one Reality because its emanated element-influences which produce the gross elements of suns radiate energy when heated to a high temperature. Light from suns illumines planets and moons.

As the mighty, flowing wind, moving everywhere, abides in space, so all beings ever abide in me. Reflect on this!

– Bhagavad Gita 9:6

One Reality only exists.

62. The supreme Reality pervades the entire universe inward and outward and is Self-shining, like fire that permeates a hot ball of iron inwardly and outwardly and shines of itself.
63. That supreme Reality alone exists. If anything else is said to exist, it is because of one's mistaken perception of it.
64. All that is seen or heard is that supreme Reality. Having realized that Reality, one sees the universe as existence-knowledge-bliss.
65. Though that Reality is everywhere, it is perceived by the eye of wisdom alone. One whose perceptions are obscured does not see the radiant Self, as a blind person does not see the resplendent sun.

Few people know that the reality of God extends fully to this material realm. – *Mahavatar Babaji*

How the truth can be known.

66. The Self, free from impurities removed by hearing the truth and by realization, shines like polished gold.

Hearing the truth may bring forth innate knowledge and inspire us to more carefully examine it. A Self-realized person is detached from conditions which blur and fragment the consciousness of people whose powers of perception are not yet highly developed.

Delusions, erroneous beliefs, may be acquired from others or may arise in the mind when thinking is irrational or powers of discriminative intelligence are not highly developed. Illusions are misperceptions of what is observed. Delusions and illusions are absent when Self-knowing is constant.

Unwavering, intuitive Self-knowledge removes all delusions and illusions. – *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 2:26*

Self-revelation that liberates.

67. That Reality, which is the Sun of knowledge, arises in the firmament of one's essence of Being and banishes darkness. The pervader and sustainer of all, it illumines all and Itself.

Spiritual enlightenment is not a personal accomplishment; it is the result of spontaneous Self-revelations which emerge when our mind is pure and our consciousness is clear.

The finite mind generates countless ideas within itself which weaken it and veil perceptions of truth. These create impres-

sions and tendencies in the mind, most of which are latent or dormant. When the mind is rid of them, the veil vanishes in a moment like mist at sunrise, and with it the greatest of sorrows also vanish. – *Yoga Vasishtha*

68. One who, renouncing all actions, worships in the sacred, stainless shrine of the supreme Self which is omnipresent, banishes all sense of difference and bestows eternal happiness, realizes omniscience, omnipresence, and immortality.

To renounce all actions is to discard all egocentric endeavors, surrender to our innate urge to be Self-realized, and meditate *in* the one, omnipresent Reality until our attention and awareness are completely absorbed in it. This is the direct way to realize the truth which permanently liberates consciousness.

ADDENDUM

The Fundamental Propositions of the Philosophy of Nondualism

- Only one Reality exists. Its transcendent aspect is absolute existence-being. Its Radiant field has three constituent attributes which influence its emanated cosmic forces that produce objective phenomena.

- Units of pure consciousness are produced by interactions be-tween the Radiant field and its emanated vibration (Om). Units which identify with objective phenomena to the extent that they become oblivious of their real nature are inclined to view themselves as independent beings.

- The primary cause of confusion, misfortune, and suffering is absence of accurate knowledge of one's true nature and of ultimate Reality. Self-realization (experience with accurate knowledge of one's essence) immediately restores units of pure consciousness to their original Self-knowing state.

- Self-realization can be actualized by learning about higher realities, insightfully examining them, and adopting mental attitudes and personal behaviors that clarify awareness and allow the difference between one's true nature and ordinary (modified) states of mind and consciousness to be known.

- Practices or actions (Sanskrit *kriyas)* that can contribute to psychological transformation and clarification of awareness include disciplined thinking; profound, systematic study of higher realities; superconscious meditation; and discarding or rising above one's mistaken sense of Self-identity.

- The culmination of right inquiry is permanent liberation of consciousness: complete freedom from all conditions which formerly confined and limited the Self.

In the first verse, Shankara emphasized that he wrote *Self-Knowledge* for those whose minds had been purified by disciplined living, were inwardly peaceful, had overcome or renounced egocentric desires, and fervently aspired to liberation.

Sustained aspiration to be spiritually enlightened, supported by your right endeavors, will enable you to quickly awaken through the stages of spiritual growth: from ordinary states of consciousness to superconsciousness and permanent Self-realization. Your mind will be purified and your consciousness will be liberated in your current incarnation. Have that as your highest aim and it will definitely be realized.

Affirm With Conviction

The Self-shining radiance of my pure essence of Being continuously illumines my mind and consciousness.

APPENDIX

Guidelines to Superconscious Meditation Practice

The Philosophical Principles, Traditions, and Essential Practices of Yoga

Adapted from the Introduction to the text of
Paramahansa Yogananda As I Knew Him

Guidelines to Superconscious Meditation Practice

superconscious *Super*, above or beyond. A clear state of consciousness without modifying influences and fluctuations which blur and fragment ordinary states of consciousness.

meditation A concentrated flow of attention.

contemplation To "look at" or examine with expectation of discovery.

Superconscious meditation practice is recommended for every person who wants to have the physiological and psychological side-benefits. It is especially helpful for truth seekers who aspire to be spiritually enlightened.

A Basic Meditation Routine

Novice meditators should first learn to patiently sit until their body is relaxed, the mind is calm, emotions are settled, and awareness is clear. Doing this for 20 to 30 minutes once or twice a day is beneficial even if advanced methods are not later used. The beneficial results include stress reduction; improved powers of concentration; rational thinking; enhanced intellectual and intuitive powers; emotional stability; strengthening of the body's immune system; slowing of biological aging processes; and refinement of the brain and nervous system.

Establish a regular schedule. Early morning is a good time to meditate. Your mind will then be somewhat calm and it will be easier to be attentive.

1. Sit upright in a comfortable chair. If you prefer to sit on the floor or on a bed or couch in a cross-legged posture, do so if it is comfortable for you.
   Relax. Inhale and exhale deeply two or three times.

Direct your attention to the front region of the brain, above and be-tween your eyebrows. Do not strain to look there. Just have your awareness there. If meditation begins to flow naturally, let it happen. As your breathing becomes slower and less forceful, your mind will be calm. Rest in that clear state of consciousness for several minutes.

2. If meditation does not flow naturally, focus your attention by using a word or word-phrase (mantra) or by observing the flow of air in your nostrils as you breathe. A word or word-phrase should be pleasant to use: peace, joy, Om, God, or Om-peace, Om-joy, Om-God—or any words of your choosing. Sanskrit mantras that are easy to use are *hong-sau*, *ham-sa*, and *so-ham*. Experiment until you discover one that is comfortable for you to use.

   When using one word, put your attention and awareness in the front region of the brain and mentally speak the word. Examples: "peace, peace, peace, peace, peace" or "Om, Om, Om, Om, Om." Continue doing this until your attention is focused, then let the mental chanting fade away and rest for a while in the calm, clear state of consciousness.

   When using a word-phrase, mentally speak the first word with inhalation and the second word with exhalation. Do it until your attention is focused, then stop chanting and rest in the calm, clear state of consciousness.

3. Before concluding your practice, acknowledge all souls in this world and in subtle realms. Compassionately radiate thoughts and feelings of good will to them.

The clear state of consciousness is a "peak experience" during which superconscious influences purify the mind,

weaken and neutralize troublesome subconscious conditions, and refresh and enliven the physical body. When you are proficient in practicing the basic routine, use the first routine described below, then use the other practices as you feel inclined to use them.

There is no specific order in which to practice various forms of meditation. Practice according to your inclination. You may use one or more forms of meditation during a practice session. If you notice that you are not attentive, resume the technique you started with or use another one until your attention is again focused, then sit in the silence.

Om Vibration Meditation

Listen to subtle sounds that you hear in your ears and around your head. Gently endeavor to go beyond the first sounds that you hear, to more subtle sounds. When the sound is clear and constant, use it as a self-manifesting mantra. Consider it to be an aspect of the omnipresent Om vibration. Let your attention and awareness somewhat merge in that sound. Expand your awareness in it. Contemplate the Radiant field of the supreme Reality from which Om continuously emanates. Aspire to apprehend and experience that Radiant field. When listening to Om, have your attention and awareness in the higher brain. Let your innate urge to have your consciousness completely restored to its original, pure wholeness determine the results of Om vibration meditation. Meditating in Om, then going beyond it, is a direct way to Self- and God-realization.

In a printed lesson prepared by Paramahansa Yogananda (then known as Swami Yogananda) in the 1920s, he explained to his students how to meditate in the Om vibration:

Close your eyes. Relax. Be aware of the inner darkness around you. Feel it. Imagine it to be filled with the Om vibration. Imagine it to be as large as Planet Earth, then so large that it contains the stars and planets—everything in the universe. Imagine it to be infinite, without boundaries. Fill all space with the consciousness of bliss [joyousness], with your attention equally everywhere. Be conscious of your immortality, knowledge, peace, and the all-pervading energies and life forces. Remain identified with the Om vibration for as long as you can, as often as you can. The infinite Reality of God will then be known by you.

To have wholesome desires fulfilled he advised his disciples to "float" them in the Om vibration with firm faith and soul-felt conviction that they would definitely be realized. He said that one should only have "necessary" desires which would enable purposes of real value to be fulfilled without interfering with spiritual practices and aspiration to be Self-realized.

Prayerful Meditation

Pray to the ultimate Reality for success in meditation practice: verbally, mentally, or with wordless aspiration to realize your true nature and your relationship with the Infinite. Do it when you first sit to meditate or anytime during your practice session. Acknowledge the omnipresent Reality around and within you. Pray spontaneously or use a prayer of your choice. Example:

Infinite Reality, I sincerely want to be spiritually enlightened. Calm and illumine my mind. Bring forth from within me all of my innate, divine qualities. Purify my intellect. Expand and clarify my awareness. Completely restore my consciousness to its original, pure wholeness.

Then wait for the response which will emerge from within

you. Observe the subtle changes in mental states and states of consciousness that occur. Patiently sit in what Christian mystics described as holy repose: restful calmness with a vivid sense of communion with the presence of God or a sense of being in God.

Affirmative Meditation

Affirm that what you want to experience or realize is emerging into your conscious awareness. Affirm audibly or mentally. If you begin with audible affirmation, speak quietly, whisper it, mentally speak it, then calmly sit, knowing and feeling that what was affirmed is experienced or realized. Use an affirmation that you prefer, or use this one:

> The radiance of my pure essence of Being is fully emerging into my conscious awareness.

Feel the purity of your essence of Being pervading your mind, clarifying and enlarging your consciousness, bringing forth your spiritual qualities, and revealing all knowledge of your true nature and of the one Reality and its processes.

Enlivening the Energies of the Chakras and Internalization of Attention

In the human body, seven major nerve plexus in the spine and brain are located where channels through which life force flows in the subtle body converge at energy centers (chakras).

- First chakra, at the coccygeal plexus, the bottom of the spine. Associated with modified, blurred, and fragmented states of consciousness.
- Second chakra, at the sacral plexus. Associated with

partial spiritual awakening mixed with modified states of mind and consciousness.

- Third chakra, at the lumbar plexus. Associated with rational thinking and effective, functional abilities.
- Fourth chakra, at the dorsal plexus. Associated with fervent spiritual aspiration, self-control, and Self-awareness.
- Fifth chakra, at the cervical plexus. Associated with powers of discriminative intelligence.
- Sixth chakra, in the front region of the brain. Associated with improved powers of intuition.
- Seventh chakra, in the higher brain. Associated with clarity of awareness and transcendent superconscious states.

In people who are not yet spiritually inclined, much of their life force is dormant in the lower chakras. It may be aroused by fervent aspiration to be spiritually enlightened; nurturing compassion, harmlessness, honesty, and truthfulness; devotional prayer; superconscious meditation practice; and by being with spiritually conscious people and having mental and spiritual attunement with them. Environmental influences at places where others have prayed and meditated—such as religious shrines, retreat centers, or quiet ashrams—may also arouse one's life forces and evoke spiritual inclinations.

- Sit upright. Put your attention and awareness in your spine and front and higher regions of the brain.
- Locate the chakra at the base of the spine. Feel it. Mentally chant "Om" and feel a vibration-response there. Chant Om by mentally saying it rather than using a long intonation.
- Ascend to the second chakra. Feel it. Mentally chant

"Om" and feel a vibration-response there.

- Continue to go up through the chakras to the front region of the brain, then the higher brain. Pause a moment. Go down through the chakras. Chant "Om" and feel a vibration at each chakra. Pause at the bottom chakra, then again go up and down through the chakras. Do this several times.
- Conclude the practice session by staying in the higher brain. Chant Om there for a few minutes; listen to Om; somewhat merge with it; go beyond it to pure consciousness.

When practicing this routine, if you see bright light in the front region of the brain or in the higher brain, it can be helpful to allow your attention to be attracted to it. Subjective perception of light, caused by activation of brain centers when attention is internalized, is not a supernatural event. If bright light is not seen, don't be concerned. It is more spiritually beneficial to experience superconscious states and to awaken to Self- and God-realization.

During meditation, if you have perceptions of mental scenes of people or places, memories of pleasant or unpleasant events, or emotional surges, avoid preoccupation with them. If you feel inclined to allow your body to sway or your arms to move: inhale, mildly tense the muscles of the body, exhale, and relax. Maintain a firm, balanced seated posture. Remember that the purpose of meditation practice is to be superconscious. Detach your attention and awareness from external conditions.

Visualization Meditation

When you notice that you are passive or inattentive during a meditation session, do something to focus your attention. Pray, use a meditation technique, or imagine

that your awareness is clear and that you are spiritually awake. Creative imagining can remove your attention from a limited sense of self-identity, clarify your awareness, and make you receptive to experiencing refined states of consciousness.

- Mentally "see" and feel yourself to be fully conscious in the present moment.
- "See" yourself as being spiritually enlightened.
- Imagine yourself to be a joyous bubble of pure consciousness in the infinite ocean of Consciousness. As a joyous bubble of pure consciousness, expand to omnipresence. Imagine that you are omniscient: that you have all knowledge of supreme Consciousness and its processes.

Aspire to actually experience what you visualize. When you are calm, you may have spontaneous, transcendent perceptions.

Analytical Meditative Contemplation

analyze To insightfully examine.

After sitting for a while in a calm, Self-aware state, if you are inclined to sit longer, meditatively contemplate that which you want to more fully comprehend.

- Contemplate your true nature. Inquire, "What am I?" If you ask "Who am I?" you may be inclined to think about aspects or characteristics of a personality-oriented self-identity. By discarding all that is not permanent—the personality, mind, and physical body—you will be able to know that you are the changeless observer. At first, such knowledge may be a well-reasoned conclusion. In time, you will have a viewpoint that provides you with

experience of what you are.

- Contemplate the Reality commonly referred to as God: it's expressive aspect with attributes and its pure-existence or absolute aspect.
- Meditatively examine the categories and processes of cosmic manifestation from the Radiant field of the expressive aspect of supreme Reality to the primordial field of nature (the Om vibration with causative influences that produce space, time, and cosmic forces). Desire to comprehend how the blending of the attributes of the Radiant field and primordial nature individualize units of pure consciousness.
- Meditatively contemplate what you were like when you were first individualized, before you became involved with space-time phenomena and temporarily forgot your true nature. Identify with your pure-conscious essence of Being.

Insights may not always be had when you are examining higher realities. Later, when you are not trying to understand what you want to know, or when you are reading metaphysical literature, knowledge may suddenly emerge into your awareness.

Transcendent Meditation

transcendent Beyond the limits of ordinary experience; independent of material things.

Acknowledge your pure-conscious essence, then patiently sit with alert expectation of discovery. If thoughts or feelings persist, ignore them. If your attention wanders, focus it on what you intend to realize. With attentive practice, you will soon be able to transcend ordinary states of mind and consciousness. When your Self-realization is flaw-

less, it will prevail when you are engaged in activities and relationships. The purity of your essence of Being will continuously enliven your body, refine your nervous system, purify your mind, illumine your consciousness, and bring forth from within you seemingly endless streams of knowledge of higher realities. When your consciousness is as pure as your essence of Being, you will be fully, spiritually en-lightened: permanently liberated from all of the conditions which formerly confined and limited you.

By your own right endeavors and God's grace, liberation of consciousness can be realized in your current incarnation. Your right endeavors allow rapid spiritual growth to naturally occur. Because of the inherent inclinations of supreme Consciousness to express more freely as and through units of itself, the more receptive and responsive you are to its inclinations to be nurturing and transformative, the more evidence of grace you will have in your life. As your spiritual awareness improves, your further spiritual growth will be easier and more rapid.

Nadi-Shodhana Pranayama

nadi-shodhana Sanskrit *nadi*, an astral channel or conduit through which life force flows, and *shodhana*, cleansing or purifying.

pranayama *Pran* (the *a* is silent), life force, and *ayama*, to increase or extend. Regulated breathing that results in slow inhalations, exhalations, and natural pauses between them. Pranayama practice elicits relaxation and calms the mind.

When we are physically and psychologically healthy, more air is inhaled and exhaled through one nostril for about two hours, then through the other nostril for about two hours.

During right nostril air-flow dominance, mental

and emotional states, and behaviors, tend to be associated with the left hemisphere of the brain. When breathing is more forceful through the left nostril, mental and emotional states and behaviors tend to be associated with the right hemisphere of the brain. Nadi-shodhana pranayama causes air to flow with equal force in both nostrils, producing coherence (harmonious inter-actions) between both hemispheres of the brain.

Use this pranayama before meditating or during meditation when you need to calm the mind and focus attention:

- Sit upright, put your attention in the front region of the brain.
- With a finger, close the right nostril. Inhale slowly and deeply through the left nostril. Pause for a moment.
- Close the left nostril, exhale through the right nostril. Pause for a moment.
- Inhale through the right nostril. Pause for a moment.
- Close the right nostril, exhale through the left nostril. Do this ten to fifteen times. You may also mentally chant "Om" when you inhale and exhale or use either the *hong-sau* or *so-ham* mantra. Notice the calming effect of this pranayama.

Experiment until you discover a comfortable rhythm of inhalation, pause, and exhalation. Notice the thought-free state of clarified awareness that you have during the natural pauses after inhalation and exhalation.

Note for Kriya Yoga Initiates

Practice the basic Kriya Yoga meditation techniques. Use the other forms as supplemental practices, especially during longer meditation sessions. After practic-

ing the basic techniques and sitting in the deep silence for a while, when you notice that you are inattentive or passive, either practice mantra meditation, pray, affirm, visualize, contemplate what you want to know or experience, or meditate in the Om vibration.

The Philosophical Principles, Traditions, and Essential Practices of Yoga

Yoga is the complete bringing together (unification) of attention and awareness with one's essence of Being and the Reality called God.

Yoga practices evolved in India several thousand years ago as a means to quicken a person's psychological transformation and unveil and actualize their innate spiritual capacities and powers. A practitioner should know the difference between ordinary *awareness* and *consciousness*. Ordinary awareness has an object of perception that it reflects to one's consciousness, the medium through which awareness operates. One who does not yet know this difference is inclined to identify with ordinary states of awareness and the ever-changing conditions of conventional existence. The purpose of practice is to be able to discern the difference between ordinary awareness and one's consciousness, and to detach consciousness from objective and subjective conditions which modify it.

The key to Self-knowing is to quiet the changes that usually occur in the mind and awareness. This can be done by dispassionate observation of objective and subjective events and by practicing meditation to the stage of superconsciousness. These methods are systematically described in the Yoga-Sutras written by Patanjali approximately two thousand years ago. Sutras are "threads" of concisely presented concepts which are to be insightfully contemplated until they are understood. The text begins with a statement declaring that what is presented is in accord with an ancient tradition.

In the first chapter, superconscious states (samadhi) and how they can be realized are described. The obsta-

cles to be overcome are subliminal influences that cause wavelike movements in one's mind and awareness that result in mental confusion, interfere with concentration, and blur and fragment awareness. In Patanjali's text, the words *samadhi* (*sam*, to bring together) and *yoga* (unification) have the same meaning.

There are two distinct stages of samadhi: oneness supported by an object of perception; oneness without the support of an object of perception.

During the first stage, attention and awareness are so fully identified with a subjective perception of light, bliss, joy, the Om vibration or subtle sounds, or a vivid sense of communion with a larger Reality, that all sense of egocentric self is absent.

During the second stage, attention and awareness are de-tached from objects of perception. Experience and knowledge of one's true nature as a spiritual being can then be had.

Beyond these two stages is the stage during which one is constantly Self-knowing when meditating and when observing, thinking, attending to duties, and appropriately relating to events and circumstances without reverting to ordinary states of awareness.

Even when samadhi can be easily experienced during meditation, or prevails after meditation, one should not presume that the ultimate aim of spiritual practice has been accomplished. One may still have false beliefs to discard or dormant subconscious inclinations that have yet to be neutralized.

When awareness is ordinary, before Self-realization occurs, one should affirm "I am an immortal, spiritual being" rather than "I am a human being trying to become an immortal, spiritual being."

Real yoga practice is repeated practice of samadhi

until Self-knowing is constant. All that is done prior to samadhi practice is preparatory.

Meditation practice can include pranayama that calms the mind and allows the body's life forces to flow freely; contemplation and absorption of attention and awareness in Om; meditation on transcendental realities; devotion to God; or contemplation on any object or ideal that is pleasing to the practitioner. The aim of right practice is to detach attention and awareness from what one is not until one's essence is realized. *Right practice* is necessary; endeavor that is not effective is without spiritual value.

In the second chapter of Patanjali's treatise, intensive Kriya Yoga practice is emphasized. *Kriyas* are "actions" which unite attention and awareness with one's pure-conscious essence. Five preliminary practices include the ethical behaviors: harmlessness; truthfulness; honesty; conservation of vital forces; and avoidance of tenacious attachments. The five fundamental disciplines are cleanliness; contentment; mental, emotional, and behavioral modification; Self-inquiry; an surrender of the illusional sense of self to allow one true Self to be discerned.

Meditation practice is described as withdrawal of attention; concentration on a chosen object or ideal to be realized; unwavering concentration; and having attention and awareness absorbed in the object or aim of meditation.

Because attentive Kriya Yoga practice weakens and removes obstacles which interfere with the emergence of innate knowledge, it is extolled as a direct way to awaken to Self- and God-realization that is suitable for anyone who sincerely aspires to be spiritually enlightened. Even when the mind can be calmed and subliminal tendencies

can be pacified by an act of will or meditating to the stage of samadhi, as long as dormant subliminal tendencies have the potential to be activated, more mental purification is needed. Frequent samadhi practice weakens and removes troublesome subliminal influences.

A Kriya Yoga practitioner may adhere to the tenets of a religious faith or may choose not to do so. When the mind is fully illumined and perceptions of higher realities are flawless, beliefs and modes of worship which may have been supportive will be transcended.

Many readers of Paramahansa Yogananda's writings presume that his emphasis on Kriya Yoga practice was that of a pranayama technique used to circulate life force through the spine and brain. While he frequently referred to this practice as Kriya Yoga, he taught all of the philosophical concepts and practices described in the Yoga-Sutras.

Holistic lifestyle guidelines and meditation methods described in the Yoga-Sutras form the Raja Yoga system. The other classical systems are Hatha, Bhakti, Karma, and Jnana Yoga.

Adherents of Hatha Yoga practice a variety of postures (asanas), pranayamas, and procedures that contribute to total well-being and provide a degree of control of the mind and body as preparation for meditation practice.

Bhakti (devotional love) Yoga adherents endeavor to express compassion and kindness toward everyone while being devoted to God-realization. Adherents of this path should avoid allowing sentimental feelings or emotions to interfere with rational thinking or to influence their behaviors.

Karma Yoga is the way of skillful performance of duties (and all other actions) without attachment to them

or their results. One is then no longer unduly influenced by the effects of past thoughts or actions or by transitory events that occur. The words *karma* and *kriya* are derived from the Sanskrit verb root "to do"—to cause something to happen. Karma is usually considered as ordinary causative influences: one's thoughts, desires, inclinations, intentions, actions, and subconscious tendencies of which one may or may not be aware. Kriyas are intentional actions implemented to quicken psychological transformation; calm and purify the mind; improve intellectual and intuitive powers; resist, weaken, and eliminate troublesome subconscious influences; refine the brain and nervous system; clarify awareness; and allow the practitioner's spiritual capacities to be unveiled and actualized.

Jnana (*gyana*, knowledge) Yoga practice is suitable for truth seekers whose intellectual and intuitive powers are, or can be, highly developed. Philosophical concepts are insightfully examined, valid knowledge is acquired, what is not true is discarded, intuitive insights occur, and the facts of life are directly perceived as innate knowledge of one's true Self in relationship with the Infinite emerges.

A *tradition* is the transmittal of knowledge from one generation to another, usually by oral communication. In the Kriya Yoga tradition which I represent as a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, all of the useful practices of the classical systems are taught in accord with the learner's psychological temperament and capacity to practice.

Kriya Yoga practices are ideal for truth seekers in our current era because the intellectual and intuitive powers of human beings are increasing and more people are able to understand and appreciate the philosophical concepts upon which they are based.

The four primary aims of life to accomplish are to:

1. Learn how to live in harmony with natural laws of cause and effect while using knowledge and skills to enhance our lives and the lives of others.
2. Have necessary desires easily fulfilled.
3. Have the material resources we need for our well-being and to accomplish purposes that are of value.
4. Awaken to liberation of consciousness.

Yoga traditions emphasize the usefulness of having a *guru* (teacher). A guru should be knowledgeable and competent as a result of his or her own prior practice.

A disciple is a "learner" or "student." The easiest way to acquire accurate information is to obtain it from others who are already knowledgeable. Newly acquired knowledge should be tested by personal experience to verify its usefulness. Knowledge that is not used is of little value. Many people who read books and attend churches, seminars, and meditation retreats for decades, have not experienced satisfying spiritual growth or obvious improved circumstances.

A common mistake that some disciples make is to hope that their newly acquired higher knowledge or episodes of inattentive meditation will enable them to have improvements in their life without having to transcend ordinary states of awareness. They may want to have the results of right endeavor and spiritual growth without having to change their habitual ways of thinking and behaving.

A person with a strong sense of individualism (of will and personality) can succeed as a disciple if their will to learn and to grow to emotional and spiritual maturity is wisely directed and they are willing to allow their incli-

nation to be overly assertive to be moderated by humility. If the sense of individualism is so strong that they insist on dramatizing an inflated sense of self-importance, they may resist learning and have difficulty accepting new ideas or wise counsel that require them to modify or renounce assertive, ego-driven behaviors.

Emotionally immature people who are interested in discipleship may lack a sense of self-worth, have doubts about their ability to control thoughts and behaviors, or want to have a dependent relationship with a teacher, or with God.

Characteristics that nuture discipleship are:

- *Sincerity*. With pure motives and not inclined to merely pretend to be interested in learning.
- *Willingness to learn*. Discipleship requires an open-minded mental attitude, ability to discern truth from untruth, quick acceptance of useful information, and constructive behaviors.
- *Intelligence* to comprehend philosophical concepts and whatever else one may need to know.
- *Rational thinking* along with ability to make right choices and wisely use imagination and will power.
- *Absence of mental perversity* (a neurotic inclination to distort or misuse what is learned).
- *Respect for the teachings and for the teachers* of a tradition of spiritual practice that is of value.
- *Total commitment* to ethical living, profound study, and intensive spiritual practice. Discipleship is not suitable for one who does not adhere to wholesome life-style regimens, prefers to be preoccupied with useless philosophical speculation or fantasy, or is only mildly interested in being Self-realized.

A cloistered or monastic environment is not necessary for discipleship. Some people can thrive in such an environment, while others may become neurotically preoccupied with self-centered interests. Most spiritual aspirants can make satisfactory progress by living a wholesome, balanced life with duties to perform and opportunities to appropriately relate to others, fulfill useful desires, and grow to emotional maturity.

What is important for a disciple is to live a well-ordered life, meditate superconsciously, and be aware of abiding in the wholeness of God. It can also be helpful to schedule occasional private retreats in a quiet place that is conducive to physical and mental renewal, where ordinary duties and concerns can be temporarily ignored and meditation can be practiced more intensively.

Constant personal association with one's guru is not always necessary. After philosophical concepts and lifestyle and spiritual practice routines have been learned, the disciple's responsibility is to apply what has been learned. Communication between the teacher and student should occur when the student needs guidance. The teacher's role is to encourage the student to grow to emotional and spiritual maturity and awaken to Self- and God-realization. A person who is satisfied with a modest degree of improvement of personal circumstances or with enjoyable meditative perceptions rather than authentic, transformative spiritual growth, is not yet prepared for discipleship.

For a teacher-student relationship to be of real value, personal communication must actually occur. It should not be avoided by the student when the teacher is accessible, nor should it be only imagined to exist or presumed to be telepathic.

I receive telephone calls and e-mail from individuals

who say they have visions of Paramahansa Yogananda, or other spiritual teachers who are no longer in the body, and are being guided by them. They then tell me that they are confused or have personal problems over which they have little or no control. If they had direct, meaningful contact with a spiritually enlightened teacher, they would not be confused or frequently have troublesome circumstances. Because they are inclined to fantasize, they do not always think rationally and are not willing to assume responsibility for their thoughts, behaviors, and circumstances.

The desire to be spiritually awake can more easily be fulfilled by daily, right practice of meditation and aspiration to be Self-realized, nurtured by faith that it will be accomplished.

My guru often said, "Devotion is more important than practice of meditation techniques; together, they are an unbeatable combination."

A person whose psychological temperament is mainly devotional may think that intellectual analysis of higher realities is unnecessary or may neglect superconscious meditation practice. A person who is inclined to intellectually examine philosophical concepts and to meditate, may need to be reminded of the usefulness of nurturing devotion.

Because spiritual awakening occurs more easily when the body is healthy, the mind is well-ordered, emotions are stable, environmental conditions are supportive, personal relationships are ideal, behaviors are well-disciplined, and actions are constructively purposeful, everything that one does should be viewed as spiritual practice. If ordinary states of consciousness are allowed to prevail or thoughts and behaviors are allowed to be influenced by moods, whims, or subconscious inclina-

tions, meditation is not likely to be transformative.

When a disciple is willing to be fully committed to right living and spiritual practice, initiation can be offered, which may be a simple affair or may include a formal ceremony. Initiation is a rite of passage into a body of knowledge and the company of adherents of that knowledge. The occasion of initiation should be viewed as a "new beginning" that empowers the disciple to more quickly fulfill his or her spiritual destiny.

Awakening to Self- and God-realization to liberation of consciousness should be considered as being possible in one's current incarnation rather than as a goal to be accomplished in the distant future, as one leaves the body, in an astral realm, or during another physical incarnation.

At the time of initiation, one is instructed to be committed to ethical living and spiritual practice, and meditation methods may be taught. In the Kriya Yoga tradition represented by Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, and their successors, initiates are taught a unique pranayama and supplemental meditation methods which are to be regularly practiced. When conditions are ideal, the guru's consciousness blends with the disciple's consciousness and a spiritual force is transmitted that awakens the disciple's dormant soul forces. A psychic connection is then permanently established between the guru and the disciple that enables the disciple who nurtures it to be receptive to streams of supportive grace that flow through the guru and the lineage of gurus.

The spiritual bond between the guru and the disciple is maintained and strengthened when the disciple adheres to spiritual practices as taught by the guru. The bond may be weakened if the disciple allows distractions

to interfere with it. Harmonious mental and spiritual attunement with one's guru allows the relationship to be of the greatest spiritual value to the disciple.

In August 1950 I was initiated into the Kriya Yoga tradition by Paramahansa Yogananda. In 1951, in late autumn, he ordained me to teach and to initiate others.

Publisher's Note

The Publishers hope that the information presented in this book will be immediately helpful to every person who needs it. It will be beneficial during their endeavor to acquire accurate knowledge of higher realities, and realized when their consciousness is fully illuminated.

In the first verse, Shankara emphasized that he wrote *Self-Knowledge* for those whose minds had been purified by disciplined living, were inwardly peaceful, had overcome or renounced egocentric desires, and fervently aspired to liberation.

The Publishers take this opportunity to thank the staff of NAB for obtaining this masterpiece manuscript. Warm thanks are also extended for the cooperation and encouragement from CEO, Mrs. Jyotsna Khandelwal. The manuscript has been fully checked by editorial department of NAB.

Editor

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